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ABSTRACT

This paper examines issues in the inclusion of parents and families of children with disabilities in the educational process, including societal changes affecting families, barriers to family involvement, changes in the definition of parent involvement, and principles for involving families. A section on background notes the importance of family involvement in federal legislation, especially the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Changes in family structure and in society are noted, including increases in the number of working mothers and America's high infant mortality and teen pregnancy rates. Barriers to parent and family involvement are specifically identified, including time pressures, discrepancies in values between home and school, childcare problems, language barriers, and cultural differences. Ten principles of family involvement are stated, such as: (1) families require individualized services and programs; (2) all families and children have their strengths; (3) most parents do care and want to help their children; (4) acceptance of and respect for diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial heritages, lifestyles, and values are essential; and (5) family involvement should be integrated throughout the entire education services system. Implications are drawn for home, school, and community environments in the critical areas of caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation. (Contains 38 references.) (DB)

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Inclusion of Parents and Families of Children with Disabilities in the Educational Process: Issues, Concerns, and Paradigm Shifts

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The involvement of parents and families in the education of their children with disabilities is essential. Despite the original intention of federal legislation for parents of children with disabilities to be fully involved in the educational process, many parents and family members report feeling disenfranchised and alienated from educational systems. The following pivotal issues surrounding family involvement are addressed here:

- *societal changes affecting families,*
- *barriers to family involvement,*
- *changes in the definition of parent involvement,*
- *principles for involving families, and*
- *implications for new directions in family involvement.*

Our nation cannot afford to lose one parent or child to the negative forces in society. Parents are the single most critical factor in the education and future of their children; however, we all have a role in assuring the success of children. All families and children merit opportunities for growth, change, and development.

BACKGROUND

Federal legislation supporting parent/family involvement in education (IDEA, PL 94-142, and PL 99-457) has clearly demonstrated an intent to involve families of children with disabilities in all aspects of education. Families are involved in early childhood education programs and in decision making for educational assessment, placement, and programming for children with disabilities. Parents are expected to participate in the development and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs). Families are involved in parent leadership programs, family workshops, parent technical assistance projects, parent information and training networks, and family conferences. The intent of the federal legislation is to involve families in every aspect of their children's educational programs. Yet, many parents report feeling disenfranchised and alienated from educational systems designed to help their children.

The legislation related to children with disabilities was enacted as a result of both political factors and research. Parent advocacy groups and organizations promoted and lobbied for increased inclusion of family members in the decision making process for educational purposes. The resulting legislation fostered greater awareness of parents' and children's rights. Issues of due process, assessment, instructional placement, and related service needs are daily issues in the provision of services to children with disabilities. In spite of the intent of the federal legislation, most parents do not know how to obtain services for their children (International Center for the Disabled, 1989). While legislation has addressed parents' and children's rights, research has appraised the efficacy of family involvement in education. The research literature clearly indicates children's performance, both academic and social, improves if parents are actively involved in their children's education (Henderson, 1987). Numerous articles, reports, and books have been written on family involvement, but only a small percentage of parents and families are integrally involved in their children's formal education. Parents and families, for the most part, are still on the sidelines in education (Davies, 1991). Yet, the research literature (Henderson, 1987; White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992) clearly expounds on the benefits of involving parents and families in education.

The research of Davies and Henderson (Davies, Burch, & Johnson, 1992; Henderson, 1987; Henderson, 1988) indicates the benefits of family involvement in education are overwhelmingly positive for children. The major benefits for children include:

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- higher grades and test scores,
- long-term academic achievement,
- positive attitudes and behavior,
- more successful programs, and
- more effective schools.

Henderson's review of 49 research studies on the effectiveness of parent involvement in education produced further conclusions (Henderson, 1987; Henderson, 1988). From the studies thus far, researchers learned several important things about families and education. These include:

- Families provide the primary educational environment for children.
- Involving parents results in improvement in student achievement.
- Family involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, long-lasting, and well planned.
- Children's benefits are not confined to early childhood or elementary levels; there are strong effects from involving parents continuously through high school.
- Having parents involved in their own children's education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels in the school.
- Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. Parents do not have to be well educated to help.
- Schools and homes cannot look upon each other as isolates; they must interconnect with each other and with the world at large.

The research clearly demonstrates when parents are involved in their children's education, their children are more successful. The children learn more and the learning transfers to real life situations in the home and community.

Davies (1991) and Hall and Henderson (1991), in their research on how schools reach out to families and communities, characterize "family support" programs aimed at strengthening all aspects of the child's development as: (a) stressing parent education at home and (b) helping parents connect with natural support systems. The common themes present in all family involvement programs are: (a) providing success for all children and believing all children can learn; (b) serving the whole child through linking the social, emotional, physical, and academic growth and development; and (c) sharing of responsibility among the school, home, and community.

Although the research findings on the value of family involvement are unquestionably positive, unfortunately the research on the participation of families of children with disabilities demonstrates they are not integrally involved in their children's education (Coutler, Johnson, & Innis, 1991; Bailey, Buysee, Edmondson, & Smith, 1992; White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992). Reasons why parents are not involved in quality educational programs for their children abound. The research (Hodgkinson, 1992; Davies, 1991) suggests educational institutions have not adjusted to the tremendous changes occurring in families over the last 25 years. In subsequent sections of this paper, the following issues will be discussed: (a) the changing structure of family and society, (b) barriers to family involvement, (c) a paradigm shift in the definition of parent involvement, (d) principles used to involve families, and (e) implications and new directions for family involvement.

CHANGING STRUCTURE OF FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Changes in Family Structure

Over the past twenty years, society has undergone quantum shifts and children and families are caught in this process (O'Connell & Sontaf, 1992; Hanson & Lynch, 1992).

According to Harold Hodgkinson, Director of the Center on Demographic Policy, some striking changes occurred in the makeup of the American family during the last decade (Hodgkinson, 1992). Only about 6% of all households are of the "Norman Rockwell" type with a working father, housewife mother, and two children of public school age. Fifty-two million households contain a married couple; 41 million do not include a married couple. It is projected by the year 2000, these numbers will be equivalent. Further striking changes in family structure identified by Hodgkinson include:

An increase in the number of working mothers.

- Eighty-two percent of all children (under age 18) now have working mothers.
- Sixty percent of mothers of preschool-aged children (under age six) work outside the home at least

part-time.

An increase in the number of single parents.

- Women who are single parents with a median income of $10,982 (as of 1989) are raising 13.7 million children.
- Forecasters of demographic changes predict 60% of today's children will live with a single parent at some time before they reach age 18.
- In 1990, 1.2 million men were raising kids by themselves, compared to 6.6 million women. Also, over 3 million children were being raised by their grandparents.

An increase in the number of poor children. In 1990:

- Over 20% of all children under age 18 were poor.
- Thirteen percent of all children were regularly hungry.
- Twenty-five percent were born to unmarried parents.
- About 350,000 children were born to drug-addicted mothers.
- Nineteen percent had no health insurance.
- One hundred sixty-six juveniles of every 100,000 were behind bars.

The majority of mothers work full-time jobs. Single mothers have little time to help their children in school work. Single mothers also are more likely to experience poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 1991; Hanson & Lynch, 1992). Almost 13 million children live in poverty in the U.S. -- an increase of nearly 3 million in the past decade. Minority children represent the greatest portion of new children living in poverty (Carson, Huelskamp, & Woodall, 1991). An immense increase in immigrants whose primary language is not English has added to the language differences of children and to the schools' need for preparedness in addressing these changes (Carson, Huelskamp, & Woodall, 1991).

Changes in Society Affecting Children and Families

The following summarizes the literature on changes in the United States that are negatively impacting families and their children's learning and performance in school. These changes in society include health, social, economic, and language difficulties.

- America's rate of infant mortality, illness, and teen pregnancy approximates many third world countries. (McFadden & Burke, 1991).
- Infants born drug-exposed have increased three-fold over the past five years (Children's Defense Fund, 1991).
- The number one cause of mental retardation is fetal alcohol syndrome (Sautter, 1992).
- Minorities, who are projected to account for 60% of the population growth by the year 2000, will experience the greatest problems with health, economic, and social issues (MIT, 1990).
- Almost 44% of black children and 37% of Latino children live in poverty compared to about 15% of white children (Children's Defense Fund, 1991).
- Single mothers are disproportionately over-represented among the poor (Children's Defense Fund, 1991).
- By 1995, 62% of all preschool children will have a mother who is employed outside the home (Children's Defense Fund, 1991).
- Minority families will experience more language problems (Morrill & Gerry, 1990).
- Poor social and health conditions contribute to learning problems (Kirst & McLaughlin, 1991).

According to Harold Hodgkinson (1992), the composition of the American youth population in our future will look very different from the composition of the youth population during the middle part of this century. He states by the year 2010, the population of four states (i.e., New York, Texas, California and Florida) will be comprised of approximately one third of the nation's youth and more than half of these youth will be "minority" according to the current definition of the term. He emphasizes, however, "the real minority" in these four states will be non-Hispanic white youth. Hodgkinson's demographic studies further indicate by 1995 the majority of high school graduates from the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California will be what we have traditionally called "minority students" (Hodgkinson, 1992).

Since the mothers of 82% of all children work, business and government must respond to the rapidly increasing demand for child care. Fifteen million women with an income level only $400 over the poverty line are raising children without the father present. Sixty percent of all children will spend some time with a single parent before reaching age 18. The single parent family will become the new "typical American family."

Hodgkinson further states the single factor holding most children back, regardless of race, is poverty. About 32% of all children in 1992 are at serious risk of failure in school and life. Between 1980 and 1990, the U.S. increased 10% in population. During this time, the prison population in the U.S. increased by 139%. Prisoners cost the taxpayers over $20,000 annually; 80% of the prisoners are high school dropouts. We now lead the world in the percentage of our population behind bars. One prisoner takes away the money for six children in Head Start programs (Hodgkinson, 1992).

The middle income level of our society is declining while the rich and poor levels are increasing. We are creating two work forces: one in minimum wage jobs and the other in well-paying jobs. For every new job created for the computer programmer, eight new jobs are created for food service workers (Hodgkinson, 1992).

BARRIERS TO PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The National PTA (1992) attempted to identify the problems associated with involving parents and families in education by conducting a survey of over 27,000 local unit presidents. The national organization asked the local PTA presidents what problems they were experiencing with involving parents in school activities. The responses indicated parents do not have enough time (89%); parents feel they have nothing to contribute (32%); parents do not understand the system (32%); parents lack child care (28%); parents feel intimidated (25%); school functions are scheduled at inconvenient times for parents (18%); parents encounter language and cultural differences (15%); parents do not have access to transportation (11%); and parents feel unwelcome at school (9%). The parents in the National PTA Survey also shared their opinions about why parents and families are not more involved in their children's education. The reasons for lack of involvement included:

- **Time.** It is difficult for single and working parents to get to meetings, conferences, and school functions.
- **Discrepancy in values.** Some parents feel intimidated by principals, counselors, and teachers.
- **Don't understand the system**.. Parents do not understand how the regular and special education systems work.
- **Childcare.** Parents often have other children at home and feel discouraged about bringing their children to school events.
- **Language**. English-as-a-second-language parents may have problems understanding the printed materials or speeches at meetings.
- **Cultural differences**. Manners and courtesies are different for different cultures. One can, unintentionally, offend or embarrass parents from different cultures. Religious holidays can cause conflict.
- **Transportation.** Parents lack transportation for attending meetings and conferences.
- **Not welcomed.** Parents feel that they are not welcome in the school. Professionals do not make them feel comfortable.

Parents and families feel lost in this maze of society and educating children. The parents live alone without support and care from immediate family members, schools and/or community agencies. They fear the system and what it may do to their children if they complain. They don't know how to access the system and how to get services.

Presently, the three systems of family, school, and community are operating in isolation from each other. Far too often, each system is overlooking the others' needs. Bonnie Benard, a noted researcher in social change, asserts before any significant change can occur, the following must be present: (a) care and support, (b) high expectations, and (c) meaningful participation among all three systems of family, school, and community. She concludes we must aggressively pursue collaboration in order to build healthy, resilient children. If this coordination does not occur, more barriers to teaming and supporting each of the systems will occur (Bernard, 1991).

CHANGING PARADIGM FOR NEW DEFINITION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Don Davies indicates the old views of parent involvement have proven to be only minimally effective in meeting

today's challenges (Davies, 1991). A new paradigm of family involvement is evolving. The League of Schools Reaching Out proposes an expanded definition of parent involvement as described in the following:

- For many children, "family" is more encompassing than "parent," which is too narrow to describe today's reality. Family includes the most significant adults in children's lives, who may be grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, or even neighbors who provide child care rather than a father or mother.
- Involvement goes beyond parents or families to include all social and community agencies that serve children. Urban families who are experiencing stress because of economic difficulties, who are struggling to find housing, or who are encountering barriers of language, culture, and social customs need assistance and support.
- The new definitions do not require family members to come to school. Services and activities can occur in neighborhood settings and at home.
- The new definitions reach out to include those who lack English language proficiency, self-confidence, or the energy or time to take part in traditional parent involvement activities as well as those who fear schools because of cultural norms or negative school-related experiences.
- The new definitions focus on the priorities of families instead of the agendas of teachers and administrators. The definitions extend beyond purely academic functions to all contributions of families to their children's education.
- The new definitions emphasize the inherent strengths of families instead of the old "deficit" perception of the traumas, troubles, and pathologies of urban families (Davies).

The new definitions for family require a fresh look at how parent and family involvement programs are organized. According to a report developed by James Coleman, schools have to reach out to parents before positive results will occur (Coleman, 1991). Waiting for parents to participate will most likely result in an antagonistic confrontation rather than in an amicable exchange between school and home. Don Davies and his colleagues at the Institute for Responsive Education believe schools have to reach out and collaborate with parents, other schools, and community agencies on parent and family involvement issues (Davies, Burch, & Johnson, 1992). Examples of the various types of collaborative activities include: (a) developing a school help program for families; (b) fostering more effective school-home communication; (c) encouraging family assistance to schools; (d) involving families in learning activities at home; (e) including families in governance, decision making and advocacy activities for schools; and (f) collaborating with community agencies on family programs. According to Davies, these areas of collaboration for schools were modeled on Joyce Epstein's research in family involvement in education. With these new definitions, home-school-community partnerships are needed more than ever to assist children in succeeding in school and life.

PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

With the vast changes in families and with the risk of failure placed on children in our society, one could easily lose hope that someday children will have a better chance for survival and success in life. In order to bring the dreams for our nation's children to fruition, improved policies for family involvement in education must be developed along with increased opportunities for children to obtain full support from families, schools, and community agencies (Edge, Richardson, Marsh, Cunningham, & Clark, 1993).

Diane Davis and her colleagues Kroth, Van Curen, and James believe a founding set of principles should guide school systems, state agencies, educational projects, and communities in the development of family involvement programs (Davis, Kroth, James, & Van Curen, 1991, p. 3). Their guiding principles are as follows:

1. Families are not a homogeneous group; therefore, services and programs should be individualized, based on families' needs and preferences, and a variety of types and levels of activities should be provided (Kroth & Otteni, 1985).

2. "Parents have to be recognized as the special educators, the true experts on their children; and professional people -- teachers, pediatricians, psychologists and others -- have to learn to be consultants" (Hobbs, 1978, p. 497).

3. All families and children have strengths.

4. Most parents do care and do want to help their children; however, sometimes they lack the skills. These skills are teachable.

5. Lack of involvement may reflect overriding primary family needs which take first priority rather than a lack of

caring or concern.

6. A variety of legitimate family forms can promote healthy child and family development.

7. Acceptance of and respect for diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial heritages, lifestyles, and values are essential.

8. Family involvement is critical across the years of childhood and adolescence.

9. Family involvement is not a separate, distinct component; it is integrated throughout the entire education services system.

10. Successful family involvement is a long-term process. Program development takes time, commitment, and extensive work.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Family involvement in education requires commitment, consistent follow-up, and collaborative planning and development across all agencies. Maupin Elementary School in the Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, Kentucky) is attempting to implement these ideas and principles into a total family involvement learning choice school. The parents and educators at Maupin have developed a matrix of activities which reflects home, school, and community environments across Bernard's (1991) critical areas of caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation (J.Deeb, personal communication, January 7, 1993). An example of this matrix is found in the following table.

Care and Support	High Expectations	Meaningful Participation
HOME		
Health and Safety	Homework	Parent Workshops
Basic Needs	Modeling	Involvement with Child
Promoting Education	Values/Goals	Volunteer/PTA
Motivation	Parents as Teachers	Classroom Involvement
	Positive Reinforcement	Decision Making
		Field Trips
		Opportunity to Extend
		Education into Home
		Help with Homework
SCHOOL		
Health and Safety	Establish Goals	Student/Parent Involvement
Support of Family	Rewards/Incentives	Parent Workshops
Home/School Linkage	Awards	Cultural/Multicultural Activities

Child Care	Values/Attitudes	Technology Training/Education
School-Wide Mega Skills Implementation	Positive Reinforcement	Family Resource Center
Family Resource Center	School-Wide Discipline	
Special Programs to Meet Needs	School-Sponsored Community Resources	
Academic Learning Styles		

COMMUNITY

Financial Support	Financial Assistance	Decision Making Input
Mentors	Partnerships	Sponsor Parent Workshops
Provide Services	Shared Goals	Family Resource Center Advisory Council
Training		Bacon's In School Store
Employment Opportunities		Baptist Fellowship Center
Community Connections		Girl and Boy Scouts
		Parkland Boys/Girls Club
		Louisville Urban League

Family involvement in education is broader than any singular family, school, or community program or organization. Participants in the National Parent Involvement Summit conducted by the National PTA concluded family involvement is the number one issue in education for the 1990's (Edge & Revenaugh, 1992). Twenty-three national organizations met in Racine, Wisconsin at the Wingspread Conference Center in April 1992 to discuss the importance and future direction of family involvement in their respective organizations and to develop a closer bond for supporting family involvement. These 23 organizations resolved family involvement, as part of the national focus on educational excellence, must be aggressively pursued and supported by homes, schools, communities, businesses, organizations, and government agencies working together in concerted efforts (Edge & Revenaugh, 1992).

Because of the dramatic shifts in society and the rapid growth in the number of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds referred for special education services, a powerful thrust for involving parents and families of children with disabilities in the educational process is imperative. Schools cannot assume all families are the same and parents do not care about their children. Families require options and these options must be provided collaboratively across systems. Schools and community agencies can no longer function in isolation. Universities can no longer neglect training educators to collaborate with families and communities. Businesses can no longer afford to ignore schools and community agencies. Government agencies cannot ignore the development of policies and programs for family involvement. In order to provide all children with optimal opportunities, research and model programs must be funded to develop prototypes for outstanding programs of collaborative support and care provided through home-school-community partnerships.

The Federal Resource Center of the University of Kentucky conducted a modified Delphi study to forecast the future trends and issues in special education (Hale & Carlson, 1992). Projected trends in family involvement included:

- parents will have an increased role in decision making,
- school districts will implement nontraditional approaches for involving families, and

- services will be directed to specific family and child needs and not to customary practices.

The study verified family involvement is highly desirable. Other desirable trends included interagency collaboration in the development of family-centered services (e.g., at-home crisis intervention and trained foster families) and in the training of parents. Respondents supported schools doing whatever is needed to increase family involvement .

It is evident family involvement in education is necessary to enhance better educational programs for children and families. There is no question that children perform better when parents and families are involved. How does education transform in order to match the immense changes occurring in society? Following is a set of suggestions for involving parents and families in the education of their children.

1. Collaborate and cooperate with family agencies, schools and communities in developing programs on family involvement issues. Family involvement cannot function in isolation; it is greater than any one person or organization. Schools must provide care and support for the family, set high expectations for involvement, and provide meaningful opportunity for family participation (Edge & Revanaugh, 1992).

2. Adopt an open understanding of "what is family." Involving parents of children with disabilities requires a shift in the understanding of what constitutes "family." "Family members" are interpreted as the most significant people in the life of the child. The broader context of family consists of significant adults in the home, school, and community (Davies et al., 1992).

3. Develop nontraditional approaches to family involvement. Involving families of children with disabilities goes beyond addressing parents' rights. Programs must address the basic issues of families as teachers of their children, supporters of educational and social changes, leaders of how to educate their children, and advocates for change (Epstein, 1990).

4. Develop a greater understanding and sensitivity to diversity in society. Involving parents of children with disabilities requires an increased understanding of the populations served and of the programs needed for diverse populations. Sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity is essential for successful partnerships and change. Training of all educators to accept and respect diversity is crucial to success (Hanson & Lynch, 1992).

5. Train educators to enhance and involve families in education. Involving parents of children with disabilities requires a greater commitment by universities and colleges to training educators on how to involve families. Direct field activities with families must be required. Problem solving approaches and leadership opportunities in developing partnerships with families should also be required (Epstein, 1987).

6. Support local schools and community agencies in involving families. Connections among schools, families, and communities promote the success of children in school. State departments of education should facilitate policies, plans and programs which enable, support, and encourage local schools to enhance quality family involvement through collaboration and partnership with families and the community (Chapman, 1991; Chrispeels, 1991; Chrispeels, Fernandez, & Preston, 1990; Epstein, 1987).

7. Plan for comprehensive family involvement in education. Parent involvement is most successful when it is well planned and comprehensive (Henderson, 1987). Involving parents of children with disabilities requires joint planning and development by families, schools, and communities. Opportunities for families to function as learners, teachers, volunteers, supporters, decision makers, advocates, and communicators are essential (Epstein, 1987).

SUMMARY

In a recent speech Dr. Robert R. Davila, former Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, proclaimed parents of children with disabilities are the most important factor in the future education of their children. Consequently, the federal government should promote a role for parents at every stage of program development (Davila, 1992). We all have a role to play in helping children achieve their best; however, families are the key.

All families and children merit opportunities for growth, change, and development. Our nation cannot afford to lose one parent or one child to the negative forces working in our society. We stand together as a nation of strength by bonding as families and as communities. America is no longer represented by the Norman Rockwell type of family; however, that does not mean we cannot stand together as a nation. With diversity comes strength -- if we will collaborate across programs, agencies and issues to form partnerships for promoting a better tomorrow for our children. This reaffirmation and renewal of our nation's strength was proclaimed by President Bill Clinton in his inaugural speech, "our nation can summon from its myriad diversities the deepest measure of unity" (January 21, 1993) and in his post-election speech, "our diversity can be a source of strength in a world that is ever smaller, where everyone is a part of America's family" (November 4,1992).

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New Mexico Connection:

Family-School-Community Partnerships

"It takes a whole village to raise a child" or as they say in New Mexico, "Para educar al niño se necesita todo el pueblo." The *New Mexico Connection: Family-School-Community Partnerships* is an innovative statewide collaborative initiative to develop a long-range action plan and process for promoting and achieving family-school-community partnerships throughout New Mexico. Dr. Diane Talley Davis of the South Atlantic Regional Resource Center

(SARRC) is assisting the New Mexico State Department of Education (NMSDE) in facilitating the development and implementation of partnerships which result from the full involvement of communities, families, and schools in all aspects of the process. Family-school-community partnerships are essential for effective schools and assist families and school communities in challenging all students to reach their potential. The participants in this initiative represent families and service providers from throughout the state as well as the cultural and geographical diversity of New Mexico. Crucial to success and integral to the process is this commitment to extensively involving multi-representative stakeholders as true partners in planning and decision-making. The *New Mexico Connection* began as a special education family involvement initiative and evolved to become a family-school-community partnerships initiative to assist schools and communities in meeting the specific needs of all children and their families. Included in the vision of the *New Mexico Connection* is a family-school-community partnership in each district which addresses the unique strengths and needs of each community.

Facilitation of this initiative has been a collaborative effort of the NMSDE, SARRC, and the University of New Mexico (UNM). For further information on this activity, contact either Dr. Diane Talley Davis of SARRC at (954) 473-6106, Ms. Jennifer Yahn of NMSDE at (505) 827-6541, or Dr. Roger Kroth of UNM at (505) 277-8958.

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Dr. Denzil Edge is an internationally known educator with over 20 years of experience in special education and the involvement of families in their children's education. Dr. Edge is an author, researcher, and professor at the University of Louisville and has developed numerous courses and programs on special and general education. He has written over 75 articles, books, and reports on the education of students with special needs and their families. His most recent publications include "Electronic Education: Information Highway between Home and School" and Children First: The Results of the National PTA Parent Involvement Summit. Currently, he has developed and is teaching a nationwide interactive television course for educators on family involvement in education.

Dr. Diane Talley Davis has coordinated technical assistance to state departments of education in the South Atlantic Regional Resource Center (SARRC) region since 1984. A primary focus of her technical assistance at SARRC is the collaboration among multi-disciplinary, multi-representative team members to plan and implement changes in statewide systems for connecting families, school, and communities in concerted efforts to improve the services and programs for students with disabilities and their families. Prior to joining SARRC, she has provided direct services to children and their families, taught educational psychology and research at the University of Georgia, and coordinated the development and administration of teacher certification examinations at the Georgia Department of Education.

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